

A Proposed Development Site at

Drumsna

Co Leitrim

Archaeological Screening Report

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Executive Summary

This archaeological screening report has been prepared, at the request of Sweeney Architects, on a proposed development site on Drumsna, Co Leitrim. This study aims to assess the archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage environment which currently exists on and around the proposed development site and evaluate the likely impacts that any proposed development will have on this environment. The study area upon which this report is based extends 500m from the site boundary in all directions and incorporates parts of the townlands of Drumnsa, Co Leitrim, and Drumcleavry, Cloonavery, and Charlestown (all Co Roscommon).

No known archaeological sites are found on the proposed development site. Cartographic sources do not suggest that any features of interest formerly existed on the site. No features of archaeological significance were noted on the site during the site inspection. The nearest archaeological site is an enclosure and a 19th-century graveyard on the opposite side of the street. Accordingly, the report recommends that the site be considered suitable, in archaeological terms, for development and recommends that further archaeological mitigation is not required.

1 Introduction

1.1 General

1.1.1 This report has been prepared, at the request of Sweeney Architects, on a proposed development site on Main Street, Drumsna, Co Leitrim.

1.1.2 This report was prepared in March 2022 by Dr Rory Sherlock, Consultant Archaeologist, following a site visit and a short programme of documentary research.

1.2 Site Location

1.2.1 The site is located on Main Street, Drumsna, Co Leitrim, and lies wholly within the townland of Drumsna. The property is located at ITM Co-ordinate 599424, 797482.

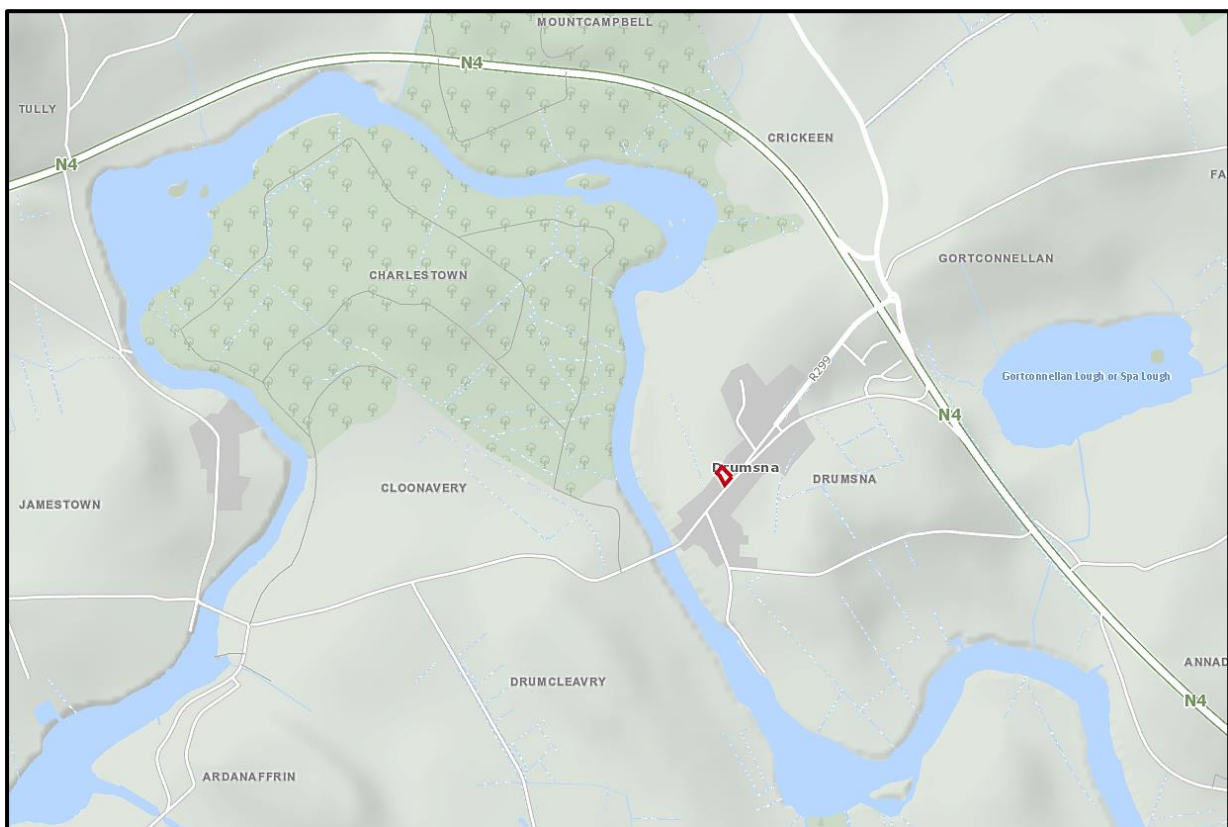


Figure 1: Site Location: Drumsna is situated on a bend of the River Shannon on the Leitrim/Roscommon border (Ordnance Survey Ireland Licence No. CYAL50214388 – ©Ordnance Survey Ireland / Government of Ireland)

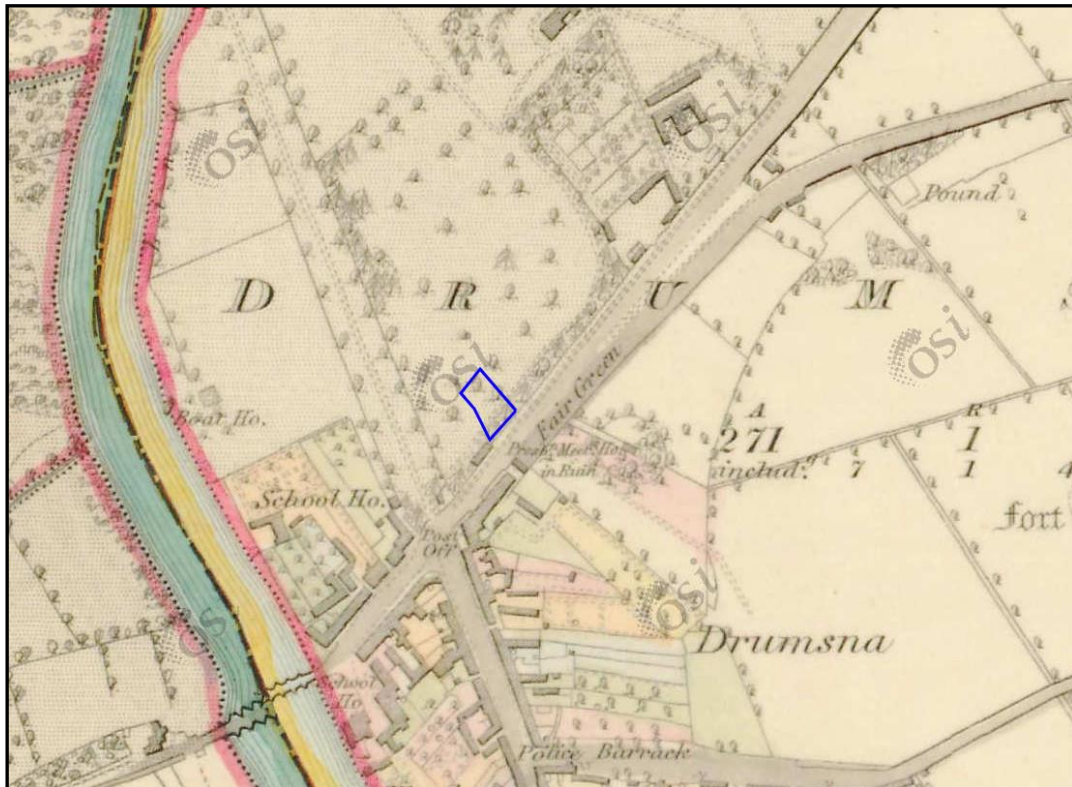


Figure 2: Location Map (extract from OS 6" map - 1st ed. From 1835) with site indicated by blue outline (Ordnance Survey Ireland Licence No. CYAL50214388 – ©Ordnance Survey Ireland / Government of Ireland)

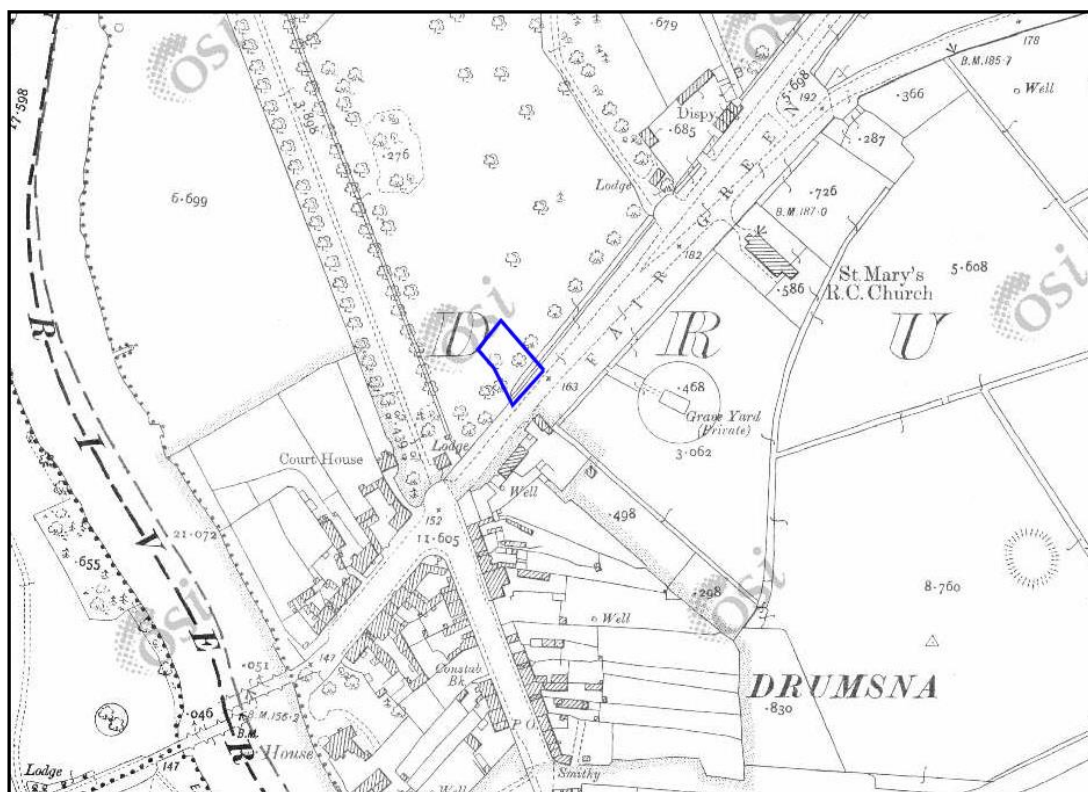


Figure 3: Location Map (extract from OS 25" map from 1909) with development site outlined in blue (Ordnance Survey Ireland Licence No. CYAL50214388 – ©Ordnance Survey Ireland / Government of Ireland)

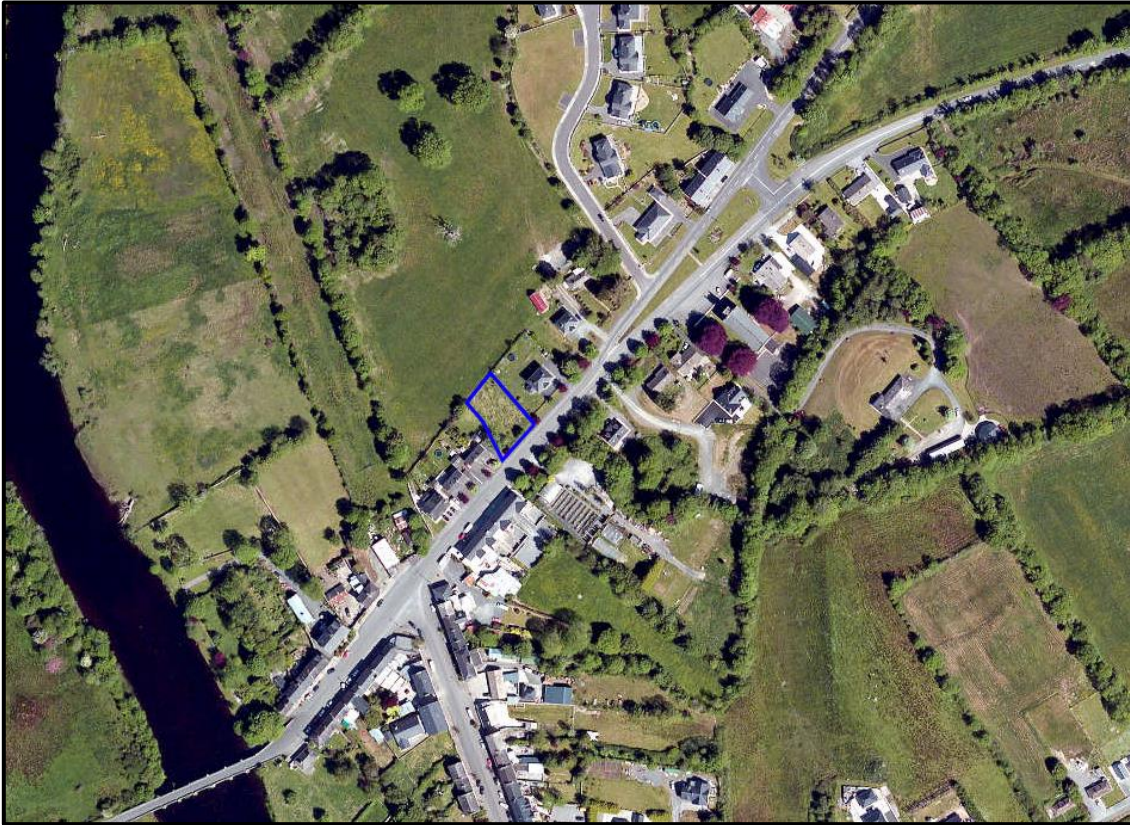


Plate 1: Aerial view of the proposed development site (outlined in blue)
(Ordnance Survey Ireland Licence No. CYAL50214388 – ©Ordnance Survey Ireland / Government of Ireland)

1.3 Study Area

1.3.1 The study area upon which this report is based extends 500m from the site boundary in all directions and incorporates parts of the townlands of Drumnsa, Co Leitrim, and Drumcleavry, Cloonavery, and Charlestown (all Co Roscommon).

1.4 Objectives and Methodology

1.4.1 Objectives

This study aims to assess the archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage environment which currently exists on and around the proposed development site.

1.4.2 Desktop Research Methodology

The desktop research element of this study utilised a several documentary and cartographic sources, and the main sources consulted may be summarised as follows:

- National Monuments Service's online Historic Environment Viewer
- Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) & Record of Monuments and Places (RMP)

- National Inventory of Architectural Heritage
- NIAH Survey of Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes
- Record of Protected Structures for County Leitrim
- Excavations Bulletin
- Aerial Photographs
- Cartographic Sources

1.4.3 *Fieldwork Methodology*

A site inspection by a professional archaeologist is a key component of any Archaeological Screening Report. During the site inspection the archaeologist records any known monuments and also seeks to identify and record any hitherto unrecorded features of archaeological or cultural heritage significance. The archaeologist walks the site, records the current land use, notes any inaccessible areas, and takes a series of photographs to illustrate the report. The site under consideration in this study was visited by the author on 16/03/2022.



Plate 2: View of the proposed development site, looking north from the southern corner

2 The Receiving Environment

The site of the proposed development is currently undeveloped and in rough pasture (Plate 2).

2.1 Legislative Status and Planning Context

2.1.1 No sites or structures listed on the Record of Monuments and Places, which are protected under the National Monuments Act 1930 (as amended), exist upon the site. Furthermore, the site does not lie within the Zone of Notification for any nearby archaeological sites or monuments (Figure 4).

2.1.2 No structures on the site of the proposed development are listed by the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage.

2.1.3 No structures on the site of the proposed development are listed in the Record of Protected Structures for Co Leitrim.

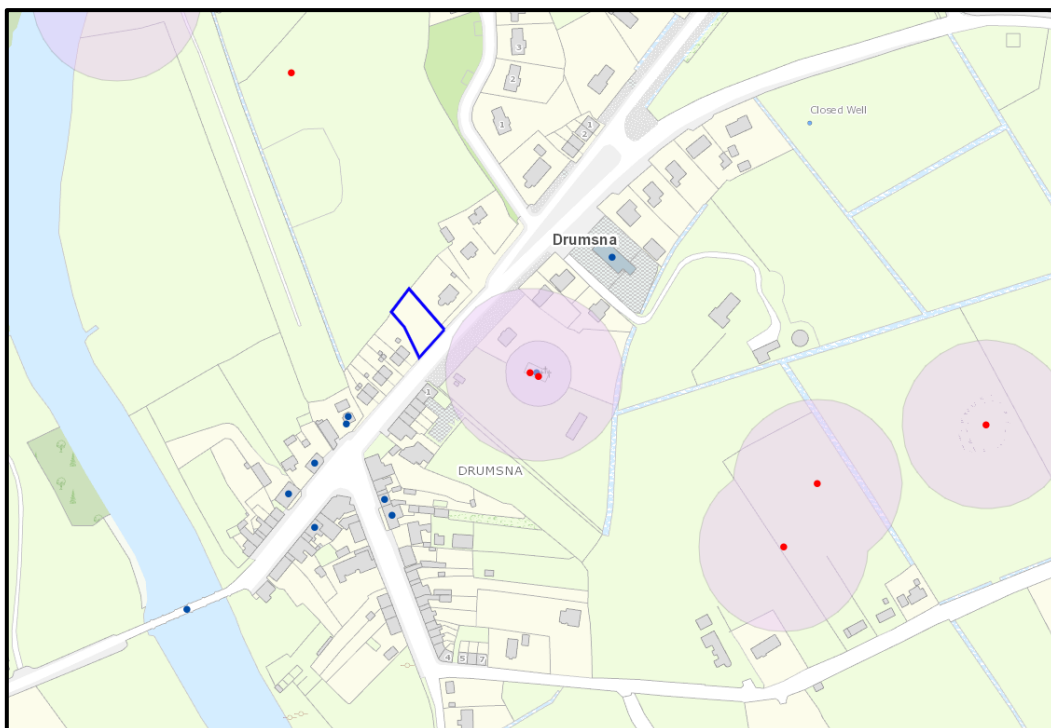


Figure 4: Site Location Map (OSI Street Map from Historic Environment Viewer) – the proposed development site is outlined in red. Also shown are known archaeological sites (red dots – see Section 2.2) and their Zones of Notification (pink overlay), and NIAH sites (blue dots)
(Ordnance Survey Ireland Licence No. CYAL50214388 – ©Ordnance Survey Ireland / Government of Ireland)

2.2 Known Archaeological Sites in the Area

2.2.1 No known archaeological sites are found on the site of the proposed development.

2.2.2 The known archaeological sites within 500m of the proposed development site may be summarised as follows:

- A ringfort (LE031-085----), and a 19th-century burial ground within it (LE031-085002-), lie 50m southeast of the proposed development site in Drumsna townland.
- Two ringforts (LE031-086----; LE031-086001-) are found *circa* 280m southeast of the proposed development site in Drumsna townland.
- A ringfort (LE031-107----) is found *circa* 280m northwest of the proposed development site in Drumsna townland.
- An enclosure (LE031-100----) is found *circa* 375m south of the proposed development site in Drumsna townland.
- A ringfort (LE031-087----) is found *circa* 380m east of the proposed development site in Drumsna townland.
- An enclosure (LE031-124----) is found *circa* 380m northwest of the proposed development site in Drumsna townland.
- A ringfort (RO012-002----) is found *circa* 420m south of the proposed development site in Drumcleavry townland, Co Roscommon.
- A ringfort (LE031-125----) is found *circa* 450m southeast of the proposed development site in Drumsna townland.
- A ringfort (LE031-068----) is found *circa* 500m northeast of the proposed development site in Drumsna townland.

2.2.3 The aforementioned ringfort (LE031-085----) and burial ground (LE031-085002-) are the only known archaeological sites within 250m of the proposed development site. The proposed development site lies 8.5m from the Zone of Notification around the archaeological sites and 50m from the ringfort. The ringfort and burial ground are described by the Archaeological Survey of Ireland as follows:

Description (Ringfort: LE031-085----): Located on a gentle W-facing slope within the village of Drumsna. A circular enclosure is depicted on the 1835 edition of the OS 6-inch map with the ruins of a Presbyterian Meeting house in the interior. The rath is a circular area (int. diam. 39m NW-SE) defined by an overgrown earthen bank (Wth

3.3m; int. H 0.25m; ext. H 0.75m) with an external V-shaped fosse (Wth of top 2.1m; ext. D 0.3m). There is an entrance (Wth 2.5m) and causeway at NNW which leads to the Fair Green of Drumsna village. The rath is bisected by a N-S field wall, and the ruins of the meeting house are in the interior. This is a roofless structure (int. dims 15.6m NW-SE; 6.2m NE-SW) with walls almost complete (Wth 0.75m; H 3-5m) and a single doorway in the NW gable. It has headstones of the Whitelaw and Parke families dating from 1819, and the African explorer, Surgeon General Thomas Heazle Parke (1857-93), is also buried here. Archaeological testing (01E0069) immediately to the NW (Read 2003) and testing (02E1235) to the SE (Halpin 2004) produced no related material.

Description (Burial Ground: LE031-085002-): Located on a gentle W-facing slope within the village of Drumsna. The rath (LE031-085001-) contains the ruins of a Presbyterian Meeting House according to the 1835 edition of the OS 6-inch map. This is a roofless structure (int. dims 15.6m NW-SE; 6.2m NE-SW) with walls almost complete (Wth 0.75m; H 3-5m) and a single doorway in the NW gable. Within the structure are headstones of the Whitelaw and Parke families dating from 1819, and the African explorer, Surgeon General Thomas Heazle Parke (1857-93), is also buried here.

2.3 Recent Archaeological Excavations

2.3.1 A search through the online database of archaeological excavations (www.excavations.ie) uncovered eleven records from the townlands in the study area. Upon closer investigation six of these excavations were found to lie outside the study area (Buckley & Condit 1990; Opie 1994a; Opie 1994b; Campbell 2003; Read 2005a; Read 2005b).

2.3.2 Five entries in the excavations database which appear to be located within the study area may be of some relevance to the proposed development site. These are:

- Christopher Read's test-trenching programme (Read 2001a) in advance of the construction of a new house 40m east the proposed development site, where nothing of archaeological interest was found (Planning File: 02/10; Excavation Licence: 01E069; ITM Coordinates 599488, 797474)
- Christopher Read's monitoring programme (Read 2001b) on an extensive sewage scheme through Drumsna village, which included excavations between the proposed development site and the nearby enclosure/graveyard, but which uncovered no archaeological features or finds other than 'a few pieces of post-medieval pottery'

- Christopher Read's test-trenching programme (Read 2003) in advance of the construction of a 22-house development *circa* 420m to the northeast of the proposed development site, which uncovered no archaeological features
- Eoin Halpin's monitoring programme on a single-house development *circa* 450m to the southeast of the proposed development site, which uncovered no archaeological features (Halpin 2002)
- Christopher Read's test-trenching programme (Read 2006) in advance of the construction of a 29-house development at Cloonavery, Co Roscommon *circa* 400m west of the proposed development site

2.3.3 In addition to the aforementioned archaeological investigations, a further project which is not listed on www.excavations.ie was found in the planning files for Drumsna. This project, a test-trenching programme undertaken by an unknown archaeologist in advance of the construction of two houses (Planning File 14/139; Excavation Licence: 15E0300) uncovered no material of archaeological interest. The maps within the unsigned archaeological report on the planning file indicate that the site wrapped around the northern side of the enclosure/graveyard and was, at its closest point, *circa* 45m from the proposed development site, though the test trenches were probably dug towards the rear of the site *circa* 100m from the proposed development site (no trench layout plan is included in the report).

2.4 National Inventory of Architectural Heritage

2.4.1 Ten structures within the study area are listed in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage. These include the following:

- A Methodist graveyard (Reg. No. 30815002), founded *circa* 1820, is located *circa* 50m southeast of the proposed development site
- A mid-19th-century formal gateway and gate lodge (Reg. No. 30815004), are located *circa* 62m southwest of the proposed development site
- A mid-19th-century milestone (Reg. No. 30815003), is located *circa* 70m southwest of the proposed development site
- A three-bay, two-storey house and former business premises (Reg. No. 30815005), built in 1800, is located *circa* 100m southwest of the proposed development site
- A terraced multiple-bay, two-storey house built *circa* 1800 (Reg. No. 30815009) is located *circa* 100m south of the proposed development site

- A four-bay, two-storey house built *circa* 1800 (Reg. No. 30815010) is located *circa* 105m south of the proposed development site
- St Mary's Catholic Church (Reg. No. 30815001), constructed in 1845, is located *circa* 120m northeast of the proposed development site
- A four-bay, two-storey house built *circa* 1850 (Reg. No. 30815006), is located *circa* 125m southwest of the proposed development site
- A terraced three-bay, two-storey house built *circa* 1800 (Reg. No. 30815008) is located *circa* 135m southwest of the proposed development site
- Drumsna Bridge (Reg. No. 30815007), a seven-arch limestone bridge across the River Shannon which was built *circa* 1840, is located *circa* 215m southwest of the proposed development site

2.4.2 The Methodist graveyard near the proposed development site is described by the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage as follows:

DESCRIPTION: *Enclosed Methodist graveyard, founded c.1820 and located within an early medieval ringfort. Marble bust and plaque commemorating [sic] Robert Strawbridge, founder of the Methodist church in North America, at the entrance. Graveyard is no longer in use. Variety of grave markers dating from 1820s to 1914. Limestone built entranceway, c.2000, with cast-iron gate and tooled limestone steps.*

APPRAISAL: *Although no longer used, this graveyard reflects the social and religious history of Drumsna. The nineteenth-century gravemarkers are well executed in carved stone and add artistic interest to the site. The modern monument is of historic interest as it is dedicated to Drumsna-born Robert Strawbridge, founder of the Methodist Church in North America.*

2.5 NIAH Survey of Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes

2.5.1 The former gardens of Mount Campbell House, Co Leitrim, located *circa* 1.2km north of the proposed development site, are listed in the NIAH's Survey of Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes (NIAH Garden Survey No. 4475). The Mount Campbell demesne extended south as far as Drumsna (the gate and gatelodge are mentioned in Section 2.4.1 above), but the proposed development site appears to belong to the adjoining former demesne of Belmont House, which no longer stands, is not named on the Ordnance Survey 6" map, and is not listed by the NIAH.

2.5.2 The former gardens of Charlestown House, Co Roscommon, located *circa* 275m west of the proposed development site, are listed in the NIAH's Survey of Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes (NIAH Garden Survey No. 4513).

2.6 Record of Protected Structures

2.6.1 Four structures in the study area are on the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) for Co Leitrim:

- A mid-19th-century formal gateway (Reg. No. 30815004) is located *circa* 62m southwest of the proposed development site
- St Mary's Catholic Church (Reg. No. 30815001), constructed in 1845, is located *circa* 120m northeast of the proposed development site
- A terraced multiple-bay, two-storey house built *circa* 1800 (Reg. No. 30815009) is located *circa* 100m south of the proposed development site
- Drumsna Quay located *circa* 380m south of the proposed development site

2.7 Cartographic Evidence

2.7.1 The Ordnance Survey 6" map from the 1835 (Figure 2) and the Ordnance Survey 25" map from 1909 (Figure 3) show no features of archaeological significance on the site of the proposed development. Both maps show the site as part of a larger field which has 'demesne shading' on it on the 6" map and which features numerous trees on both maps. The field appears to be part of the demesne of Belmont House, which is indicated on both maps (240m north of the proposed development site) but which is named only on the 25" map.

2.7.2 On all the historic Ordnance Survey maps, including the final (or 'Cassini') edition of the 6" map, which was published for this area in 1914, the site faces onto the 'Fair Green', a broad 250m-long section of the main street of Drumsna.

2.7.3 The nearest heritage site to the proposed development, located on the opposite side of the Fair Green, is labelled 'Presb. Meet. Ho. In Ruin' on the Ordnance Survey 6" map, and 'Grave Yard (Private)' on the Ordnance Survey 25" map and the 'Cassini' edition of the 6" map.

3 Site Description

- 3.1 The site of the proposed development is currently undeveloped rough pasture (Plate 2). It is unfenced from the footpath and road which bound the site to the southeast, is fenced with modern fencing on the other three sides, and the interior slopes gradually from northeast to southwest. The site is *circa* 27m wide at the roadside, narrowing to *circa* 22m wide at the rear, measures *circa* 38m from the footpath to the rear boundary, and extends to 0.1ha in area.



Plate 3: View of the proposed development site, looking west from the eastern corner



Plate 4: View of the proposed development site, looking south from the northern corner

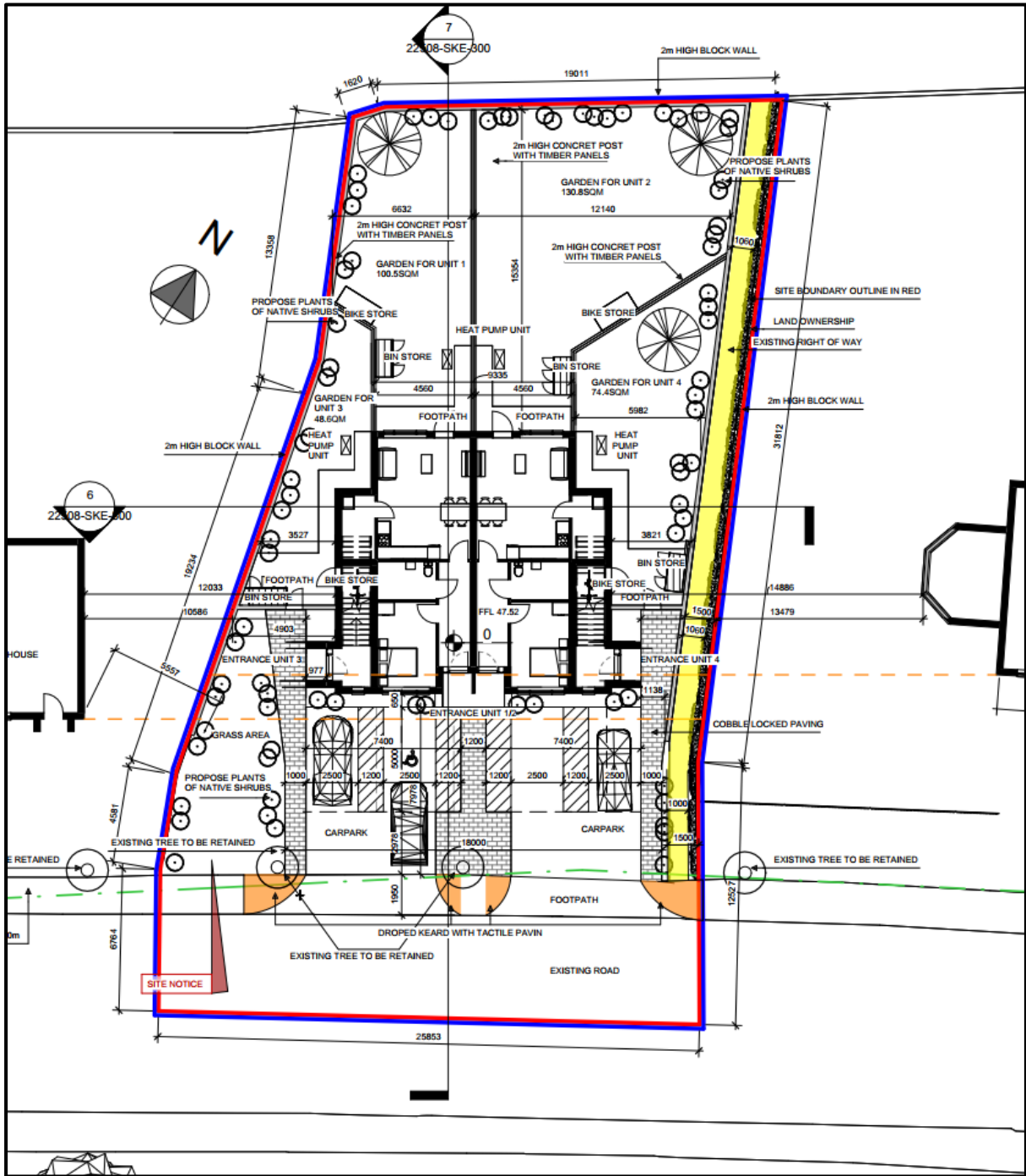


Figure 5: The proposed site layout (Sweeney Architects)

4 Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

4.1.1 This report has described the archaeological and cultural heritage context of a proposed development site at Drumsna, Co Leitrim. While no known archaeological monuments exist on the proposed development site, the site of an enclosure and a 19th-century graveyard on the opposite side of the street is a Recorded Monument and is protected under the National Monuments Act 1930 (as amended).

4.1.2 The archaeological potential of the proposed development site appears to be relatively low. Though many archaeological sites, excavation sites and protected structures exist in the 500m-radius study area, only the enclosure and the 19th-century graveyard, a formal gateway and gate lodge, and a milestone, are located within 100m of the proposed development site.

4.1.3 Given the density of 20th-century residential developments in the area, and the fact that the proposed development site represents, in effect, an infill development opportunity within the village, this report concludes that the nearby archaeological sites and protected structures will not be negatively impacted by a suitable development on the site.

4.1.4 Given the 50m distance between the proposed development site and the nearby enclosure and 19th-century graveyard, and given the fact that a test-trenching programme on a single-house development and a monitoring programme on a municipal sewage scheme uncovered no archaeological material in the area between the proposed development site and those monuments, this report concludes that a development on the proposed development site is highly unlikely to have a negative impact upon hitherto unknown archaeological features.

4.1.5 This report therefore concludes that the proposed development site should be considered suitable, in archaeological terms, for development.

4.2 Recommendations

4.2.1 If Leitrim County Council decide to issue planning permission for a residential development on the proposed development site, it is recommended that no further archaeological mitigation is required.

5 References

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